

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 QUITO 2798

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINR, EC
SUBJECT: FIGHT FOR THE CENTER LEFT

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THERE IS STRONG COMPETITION AMONG THE CANDIDATES OF THE CENTER LEFT TO FACE CURRENT PRESIDENTIAL FRONT-RUNNER, SIXTO DURAN-BALLEN, IN THE RUNOFF THAT SEEMS CERTAIN TO FOLLOW THE JULY 16 FIRST ROUND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. SERIOUS CONTENDERS FOR THE NUMBER TWO SPOT, AND THE CHANCE TO FACE AND PERHAPS DEFEAT DURAN-BALLEN, ARE THE LIBERALS' FRANCISCO HERTA, THE CONCENTRATION OF POPULAR FORCES/POPULAR DEMOCRACY'S JAIME ROLDOS, AND THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT'S (IZQUIERDA DEMOCRATICA) RODRIGO BORJA. HUERTA, AT ONE POINT, WAS THE CLEAR LEADER BUT SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES MAY HAVE DROPPED HIM BEHIND ROLDOS. BORJA, STARTING WELL BEHIND, APPEARS TO HAVE GAINED GROUND. ALL THREE HAVE DIFFICULTIES TO FACE AND OVERCOME BUT, GIVEN THE UNCERTAINTIES OF POLITICS ANY ONE COULD RUN SECOND ON JULY 16. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH A PLACE IN THE FINAL PRESIDENTIAL RUNOFF VIRTUALLY ASSURED FOR QUITO'S EX-MAYOR, SIXTO DURAN-BALLEN, WHO IS COMFORTABLY SUPPORTED BY THE UNIFIED GROUPS OF THE RIGHT
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HALF OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, THERE IS A SCRAMBLE FOR THE OTHER SLOT IN THE RUNOFF BY THE CANDIDATES OF THE CENTER LEFT. THIS CONTEST IS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE IN VIEW OF THE COMMON THESIS THAT THE MOST SUCCESSFUL OF THE CENTER-LEFT CANDIDATES HAS A VERY GOOD CHANCE TO BE THE WINNER IN THE EVENTUAL TWO-MAN RUNOFF. THAT VIEW ASSUMES THAT DURAN-BALLEN, IN THE UNIFIED RIGHT, HAS ALREADY

SECURED ALL THE SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT HE CAN EXPECT. SHOULD DURAN WIN LESS THAN 40 PERCENT OF THE VOTE ON THE FIRST ROUND, THIS COMMONLY HELD VIEW SEEMS TO HAVE CONSIDERABLE VALIDITY.

3. ABDON CALDERON: OF THE FOUR CANDIDATES WHO ARE GENERALLY GROUPED TOGETHER IN THE CENTER-LEFT, ONE, ABDON CALDERON OF THE RADICAL ALFARIST FRONT (FRA) IS POPULARLY VIEWED AS HAVING VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE FOR ELECTION. ECUADOR'S RUDIMENTARY POLLS CONSISTENTLY SHOW CALDERON AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STANDINGS AND THE EMBASSY WOULD AGREE WITH THAT PLACEMENT. THAT LEAVES FRANCISCO HUERTA OF THE LIBERALS, JAIME ROLDOS OF THE CONCENTRATION OF POPULAR FORCES (CFP)/POPULAR DEMOCRACY ALLIANCE, AND RODRIGO BORJA OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT (ID). THERE IS NO POPULAR CONSENSUS AS TO THEIR RELATIVE ORDER IN THE STANDINGS.

4. FRANCISCO HUERTA: AS THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN BEGAN, POLLS AND KNOWLEDGEABLE POLITICIANS PLACED THE LIBERALS' FRANCISCO HUERTA IN SECOND PLACE, IN SHOUTING DISTANCE BEHIND DURAN-BALLEN. SUBSEQUENTLY, HOWEVER, HIS CAMPAIGN SUFFERED SEVERAL REVERSES THAT HAVE LIKELY DIMINISHED HIS POSSIBILITIES. THOSE PROBLEMS, WHICH INCLUDE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE PARTY, ATTEMPTS BY INTERESTED PARTIES TO REPLACE HIM WITH HIS UNCLE, RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA, AND THE ILL-FAMED FEDESARROLLO CONTRACT HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECTS OF EMBASSY REPORTING.

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5. HUERTA'S RUNNING MATE, THE WELL-LIKED AND RESPECTED JOURNALIST, BLASCO PENAHERREIRA, IS A VIGOROUS CAMPAIGNER WHOSE PERSONAL POPULARITY IN THE SIERRA AND CONTACTS WITH THE MEDIA ARE VERY HELPFUL. HOWEVER, BY NAMING A FELLOW LIBERAL, HUERTA DECLINED TO GAMBLE ON EXPANDING HIS ELECTORAL BASE OVER CONSOLIDATING HIS FRACTIOUS PARTY AND THUS APPEARS SOMEWHAT ISOLATED.

6. ALTHOUGH HUERTA'S CANDIDACY WAS TEETERING ABOUT TEN DAYS AGO IT NOW APPEARS THAT IT WILL SURVIVE. BADGERED BY THE FEDESARROLLO FLAP, HUERTA TOOK A HALF HOUR ON NATIONAL TELEVISION TO STATE HIS CASE. ESCHEWING CONTRITENESS, HUERTA CAME OUT SWINGING, EXPLAINING THE CONTRACT IN SOME DETAIL, AND ATTACKING BUCARAM, THE GOE, AND THE AROSEMENA GOMEZ FAMILY (EX-PRESIDENT OTTO AND TELEGRAFO PUBLISHER EDGAR) FOR ENTERING INTO AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE TO CLOUD THE FACTS AND DESTROY HIS CANDIDACY. THE TELEVISION EFFORT APPEARED TO STIFFEN MORALE IN HIS OWN RANKS AND TILT MANY OF THE UNDECIDED TOWARD HIM. HUERTA ALSO HAS RECENTLY BEGUN TO RECEIVE MORE SYMPATHETIC TREATMENT IN THE MEDIA. HOWEVER, HUERTA HAS LOST MUCH GROUND TO HIS COMPETITORS

ON THE CENTER-LEFT, AND THOUGH HE IS A MASTERFUL POLITICAN
AND STILL HAS THREE MONTHS TO GO, IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO
MAKE UP.

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7. RUMORS AND REPORTS CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE THAT RAUL
CLEMENTE HUERTA STILL ENTERTAINS HOPES OF DISPLACING
HIS NEPHEW AS THE LIBERAL PARTY CANDIDATE. THESE EFFORTS
ARE SUPPORTED BY OLDER LIBERALS WHO REPRESENT ELEMENTS
OF THE GUAYAQUIL OLIGARCHY AND SEVERAL SPLINTER POLITICAL
ORGANIZATIONS (AROSEMENISTAS, EX-VELASQUISTAS, SOCIALISTS)
WHO HAVE NO WHERE ELSE TO GO. SINCE A FRONTAL ATTACK ON PANCHE
HUERTA'S CANDIDACY BY THIS GROUP WOULD EITHER BE DEFEATED
AT THE LIBERAL PARTY SUPREME COUNCIL LEVEL OR PROVE TO
BE PYRRHIC VICTORY BY SPLITTING THE PARTY, THE MOVEMENT
MAY BE LICKING ITS CHOPS OVER THE POSSIBILITY THAT
PANCHE'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE FEDESARROLLO CONTRACT MIGHT
LEAD TO THE DISQUALIFICATION OF HIS CANDIDACY. (UNDER
THE ELECTORAL LAW PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES CANNOT REPRESENT
ORGANIZATIONS WHICH HAVE CONTRACTS WITH THE GOVERNMENT).
HOWEVER, PANCHE, SEEMINGLY AWARE OF THE DANGER, ADROITLY
WITHDREW HIS PETITION FOR REGISTRATION FROM THE SUPREME
ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL ON APRIL 25 IN ORDER TO REMOVE THE ONLY
LEGITIMATE BAR TO HIS DISQUALIFICATION. HE PLANS TO
MAINTAIN HIS POSITION IN FEDESARROLLO TO DEFEND THE
ORGANIZATION IN THE GOE'S SUIT FOR NULIFICATION OF THE
CONTRACT IN THE NEXT TEN DAYS, FORMALLY RESIGN FROM
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FEDESARROLLO, AND THEN RE-FILE HIS CANDIDACY BEFORE THE MAY 15 DEADLINE.

8. JAIME ROLDOS: THE CONCENTRATION OF POPULAR FORCES' (CFP) JAIME ROLDOS, WHO SERVES AS ASSAD BUCARAM'S SUBSTITUTE, IS A BRIGHT, ARTICULATE AND DAPPER LAWYER WHO, IN APPEARANCE AND PRESENCE, MORE CLOSELY RESEMBLES THE ESTABLISHMENT HE CLAIMS TO OPPOSE THAN THE UNDERCLASSES HE HOPES TO LEAD. ROLDOS IS ACCOMPANIED BY THE POPULAR DEMOCRACY'S (EX-CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVES) OSVALDO HURTADO, HERETOFORE ALOOF POLITICAL THEORETICIAN WHO BECAME SOMETHING OF A MEDIA STAR DURING HIS TENURE AS CHAIRMAN OF ONE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSIONS. HIS PARTY'S MAIN STRENGTH IS FOUND IN ITS GENERALLY PROFESSIONAL, MIDDLE-CLASS MEMBERSHIP. THE UNION REPRESENTS A FORTUNATE SYMBIOSIS WITH THE CFP PROVIDING THE MASS VOTING POWER AND THE POPULAR DEMOCRACY (DP) BRINGING A STRONG CENTER-LEFT IDEOLOGY AND WELL QUALIFIED TECHNOCRATS WHICH TEND TO TONE DOWN THE DEMAGOGIC NATURE OF CFP POLITICS.

9. ROLDOS' CHALLENGE IS TO SOFTEN BUCARAM'S ROUGH-EDGED AND HOSTILE POLITICS, THUS BECOMING MORE ACCEPTABLE TO THE MILITARY AND THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT, WHILE MAINTAINING INTACT BUCARAM'S BASICALLY URBAN LOWER CLASS CONSTITUENCY. ALTHOUGH BUCARAM COULD PROBABLY HAVE WON UPWARD OF 35 PERCENT OF THE VOTE HAD HE BEEN ALLOWED TO RUN, THE ATTRACTION IS NOT FULLY TRANSFERRABLE. MOST COMMENTATORS ESTIMATE THAT ROLDOS PROBABLY INHERITED 50 PERCENT OF THE BUCARAM VOTE, BUT HAS BEEN INCREASING THAT SLOWLY AND SURELY. ROLDOS' STYLE AND RHETORIC TO THIS STAGE HAVE BEEN QUITE MODERATE, AT LEAST IN PART TO CALM FEARS ABOUT HIS BEING NOTHING BUT A STAND-IN FOR BUCARAM. SOME NEVERTHELESS

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CONTINUE TO COMPARE THE BUCARAM-ROLDOS RELATIONSHIP AS SIMILAR TO THE CAMPORA-PERON RELATIONSHIP, I. E. N ROLDOS TO THE PRESIDENCY, BUCARAM TO POWER.

10. ROLDOS' CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH FAIRLY GOOD FORTUNE SO FAR. THE CFP WAS THE FIRST TO BLOW THE WHISTLY ON THE FEDESARROLLO CONTRACT AND EXPLOITED IT TO THE HILT WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE RIGHT-WING LIBERALS. THE CFP MACHINE IN SUCH PLACES AS MANABI AND LOS RIOS HAS TURNED OUT IMPRESSIVE CROWDS FOR ROLDOS' SWINGS THROUGH THOSE PROVINCES, AND DESPITE SOME BASIC IDEOLOGICAL DISCREPANCIES, THERE HAVE

BEEN NO PUBLIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CFP AND THE DP. EVEN THE TENTATIVE FINDING OF THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL THAT DP WAS LACKING SOME QUALIFICATIONS FOR REGISTRATION AS A RECOGNIZED PARTY (QUITO 26919 MAY NOT HURT SINCE THE COALITION CAN PLAY THE MARTYR ROLE FOR AWHILE BEFORE FINALLY OVERCOMING THE CONTRETEMPS, AS IS LIKELY.

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11. BEFORE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LIBERAL HUERTA'S DIFFICULTIES, POLLS INDICATED THAT HE AND ROLDOS WERE RUNNING VERY CLOSE TOGETHER, BUT CLEARLY BEHIND DURAN-BALLEN. GIVEN HUERTA'S AT LEAST TEMPORARY DIFFICULTIES, IT DOES SEEM LIKELY THAT ROLDOS IS RUNNING SECOND TO DURAN-BALLEN AT THE MOMENT. IF HE IS ABLE TO MAINTAIN THAT STANDING HIS CHALLENGE WILL BE TO CONVINCE THE MILITARY AND THE POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT THAT HE IS MODERATE AND THAT HE WILL NOT BE DOMINATED BY ASSAD BUCARAM.

12. RODRIGO BORJA: THE IZQUIERDA DEMOCRATICA (ID) IS THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT PARTY WITH A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE THAT HAS NOT SOUGHT POLITICAL ALLIANCES. WHILE THIS STANCE WAS PROBABLY DICTATED BY THE ABSENCE OF A GUAYAQUIL -BRED POTENTIAL PARTNER, THAT FACT IS A POINT OF PRIDE WITH CANDIDATE RODRIGO BORJA, WHO HOPES THAT A STRONG INDEPENDENT SHOWING WILL ESTABLISH THE ID'S BONA FIDES AS A MAJOR PARTY. BORJA IS INTELLIGENT AND ARTICULATE AND HAS SUCCESSFULLY BROADCAST THE IMAGE OF AN ENERGETIC AND ABLE POLITICIAN. BUT, HIS EFFORTS FACE SIGNIFICANT CURRENT AND FUTURE PROBLEMS AND DESPITE HIS FLASHY MEDIA APPEARANCE, HE STILL IS NOT

SEEN AS A SERIOUS THREAT BY ANY BUT PARTY MEMBERS.

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13. BORJA'S VICE PRESIDENTIAL RUNNING MATE, IMMEDIATE PAST MAYOR OF GUAYAQUIL, RAUL BACA CARBO, A POLITICAL INDEPENDENT, BRINGS LITTLE TO THE TICKET EXCEPT THE OBLIGATORY REGIONAL BALANCE. BACA WAS APPOINTED GUAYAS PREFECT IN 1976 AND GUAYAQUIL MAYOR IN 1977. THESE APPOINTMENTS BY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT MAY DAMAGE ID'S PRISTINE IMAGE AS A POLITICAL GROUP UNTAINTED BY COOPERATION WITH THE DICTATORSHIP. IT WILL AT LEAST DIMINISH THE ID'S CAPACITY TO PAINT FORMER QUITO MAYOR DURAN-BALLEN (ELECTED, BUT EXTENDED UNDER THE MILITARY) AS THE GOE'S "OFFICIAL CANDIDATE".

14. BORJA'S CAMPAIGN IS ALSO REPORTED SUFFERING FROM A SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF CASH. AS A RELATIVELY NEW PARTY, THE ID DOES NOT HAVE THE SAME DEVELOPED SOURCES OF FUNDS AS SUCH TRADITIONAL PARTIES AS THE LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES. AND WHILE STRONGEST I QUITO, IT RECEIVED A BLOW WHEN THE FRONT RUNNER FOR THE MAYORSHIP DEFECTED FROM ID TO GO WITH THE LIVERALS. FURTHER THE ID IS POPULARLY BELIEVED TO RECEIVE FINANCING FROM THE GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. THE QUESTION OF FOREIGN FINANCING IS LIKELY TO EMERGE AS AN ISSUE OF THE CAMPAIGN AND WILL ALSO TAR THE POPULAR DEMOCRACY (CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT) VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, OSVALDO HURTADO.

15. THE ID CAMPAIGN FURTHER SUFFERS FROM A CUMBERSOME CAMPAIGN PLATFORM BASED ON MISASSUMPTIONS AND IDEOLOGY. IN HIS EFFORTS TO REMAIN PURE AND UNTAINTED, BORJA HAS ALSO KEPT THE PARTY ALOOF FROM THE OTHER PARTIES AND EVEN FROM THE EMBASSY. PERHAPS AS A RESULT, BORJA'S VIEWS SEEM ODDLY UNCONNECTED TO ECUADOR'S POLITICAL REALITY. AS THE CAMPAIGN WEARS ON AND BORJA IS TAKEN MORE SERIOUSLY HIS PROGRAMMATIC INCONSISTENCIES AND CONTRADICTIONS

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BETWEEN HIS LEFTIST-NATIONALIST IMAGE AND RULING CLASS BACKGROUND MAY COME IN FOR CLOSER, AND MMORE CRITICAL INSPECTION.

16. IN KEEPING WITH RECENT ECUADOREAN POLITICAL TRADITION, THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE THREE MAJOR CENTER-LEFT CANDIDATE GROUPS HAS NOT YET BEEN DISTINGUISHED BY MAJOR DIFFERENCES ON ISSUES. HOWEVER, THE EXPRESSION OF PERSONAL DIFFERENCES

ESPECIALLY BETWEEN BUCARAM AND FRANCISCO HUERTA - HAS BEEN SHARP AND DIVISIVE. THE HOPE OF FRONT RUNNER DURAN-BALLEN WILL BE THAT SUCH CONFUSION AND A PROLIFERATION OF CANDIDATES ON THE LEFT, CONTRASTED WITH UNITY ON THE RIGHT, WILL COMBINE TO ALLOW HIM THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF VOTES HE NEEDS TO WIN ON THE JULY 16 FIRST ROUND. BUT MOST BELIEVE THAT THIS IS A VAIN HOPE AND THAT DURAN-BALLEN WILL FALL FAR SHORT OF THE 50 PERCENT PLUS FIGURE. IN THIS CASE, THE IDEOLOGICAL ARITHMETIC - THE LEFT VS. RIGHT TOTAL VOTE - WOULD SEEM TO BE AGAINST HIM. HOWEVER, THE BITTERNESS, VITUPERATION, AND RECRIMINATION AMONG THE CENTER-LEFT CANDIDATES MAY MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE LOSERS TO COALESCE BEHIND THE FIRST ROUND RUNNER-UP. IF SO, DURAN-BALLEN MAY FIND THE RUN-OFF MUCH EASIER THAN SUGGESTED BY CURRENT IDEOLOGICAL ALIGNMENTS.
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